THE ONLY SERIOUS FUTURE PICK LIST!

COMIC & CARD PICKS!

VANTAGE™ PRESS RELEASE REVIEW

Inside information for comic dealers and collectors!

#6

USA $2.95/Canada $3.75

October 1994

WHERE'S McFARLANE?

YOU THINK YOU KNOW? GUESS AGAIN!

UNANNOUNCED COVER SPLIT!

VALIANT™?
MARVEL™?
MALIBU™?
DC™?
IMAGE™?

THE "NEXT" SHI™?

DOES THE NEXT HOT ARTIST LIVE IN THE PHILIPPINES?

INSIDE THE FALL OF TRIUMPHANT™!

THE GREATEST ADVENTURE ON EARTH IS ABOUT TO BEGIN...SM

ZEN
INTERGALACTIC NINJA®

A Live Action Feature Beginning Production December, 1994

SCENERIES ENTERTAINMENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH WD&P PRESENT
A PHILIPPE DIAZ PRODUCTION "ZEN INTERGALACTIC NINJA - THE MOVIE"
SCREENPLAY BY CHRIS SOLIMINE BASED ON CHARACTERS CREATED BY STEVE STERN AND DAN COTE

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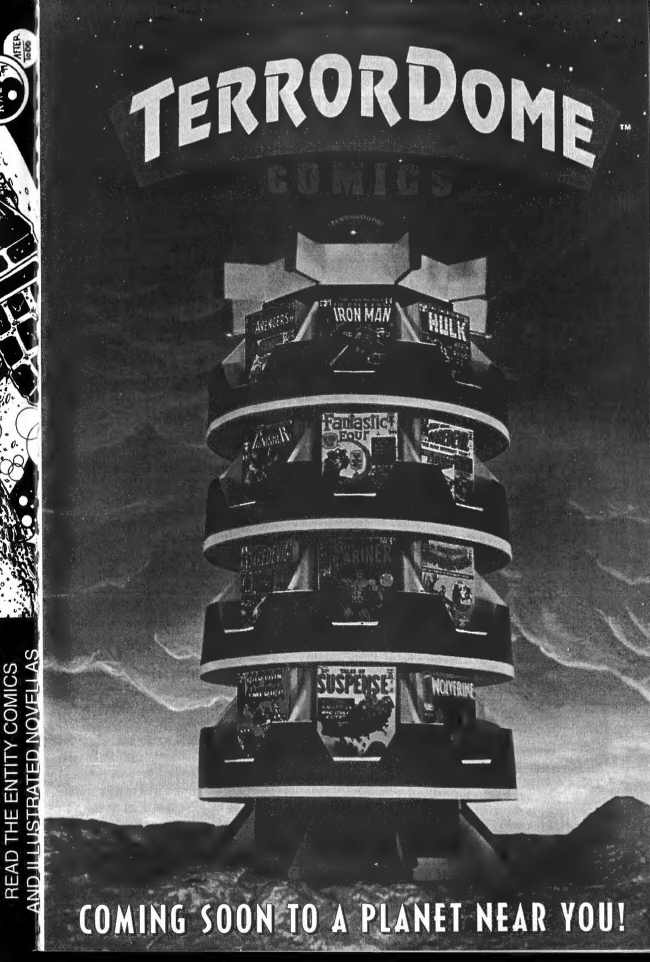
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COMICS
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Fantastic Four
SUSPENSE
WOLVERINE
READ THE ENTITY COMICS AND ILLUSTRATED NOVELLAS
COMING SOON TO A PLANET NEAR YOU!

VANTAGE™
PRESS RELEASE REVIEW
Inside information for comic dealers and collectors!
#6

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Okay, okay, we hear you. You want print runs? We got print runs.

SECTION 2 Non-Sports Picks

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SECTION 3 Comics Are For Reading First

A Top Reading Pick of the Month that deserves about a million more readers. Try 'em.

SECTION 4 Aster Interview

Is this man the next Shi? Check out this artwork! (brace yourself)

SECTION 5 Hawkman Inteview

A laid-back talk with the poor guy that's gotta draw all those little feathers.

SECTION 6 The View from Oblivion

Through a clear violation of law, the verdict is in: The movie sucks.

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Vantage: Press Release Review
Volume One, Number 6,
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Mission: To provide comic retailers, dealers,
mature collectors with information, logical analy
and entertainment not generally available to the pu

Cover: Spawn cover artwork TM & © 1994 Todd McFarlane

Top Pick of the Month

Cyberforce #8 (Image X-Month)

More Vantage Picks

Watch for the Vantage Star indicating our top picks!

Aster #1-up (Entity/Fractal)
Black Raven #1 (Mad Monkey Press)
Disney-based comics (see article)
The Flash, current issues (DC)
Mr. Punch (DC/Vertigo)
Savage Dragon #13 (Image X-Month)
Shadowhawk #0 (Image X-Month)
Star Trek: The Next Generation/Star Trek: Deep Space Nine #1-2 (DC).
Star Trek: Deep Space Nine/Star Trek: The Next Generation #1-2 (Malibu)
Ultraforce #2, #1 (Malibu/Ultraverse)

"The above pick list is a guide based on research, advisors' opinions, and staff opinions — keep in mind that even the experts will disagree. Comics can lose value after months or years. You would be wise to trade or sell books before they lose value. Read over the facts and opinions in Vantage, examine the pick list, and then make your own decisions. Remember: 1) There's no sure thing. Never bet the farm on any one book. 2) It may be fun to hunt for winners, but comics are even more fun to read! Open up one of those polybags and give comics a try!"

- Publisher Rob Golub

The Future Of Vantage

I cannot even begin to tell you how excited I am about the future of **Vantage**. Next month, we've got a Mark Waid interview that'll cover his current Flash storyline — the one that has everyone talking. After that, we'll have a Magic of the Gathering interview that will knock your socks off — hear the story of the birth of Magic, from the man who invented the game.

After that, we'll undergo a slight name change. While we'll still likely run occasional press releases, we've decided to change our name to better reflect what the magazine is all about. Thus, **Vantage: Press Release Review** is about to become **Vantage Comic & Card Picks.**

VANTAGE

Independent for the Serious Comic Book Investor

DELUXE EDITION ? December 1996

IF YOU HAD $100 TO INVEST THIS MONTH:

Title	Issue	Qty	Total
A Bunch of Crap (1996)	#0	1	$0.00
A Bunch of Crap (1996)	#1	1	$0.00
A Bunch of Crap (1996)	#2	1	$0.00
A.K.A. Goldfish	#1	1	$0.00
A.K.A. Goldfish	#2	1	$0.00
A.K.A. Jet Girl (1996)	#1	1	$0.00
A.K.A. Jet Girl (1996)	#2	1	$0.00
			$00.00

SIX QUIRT COMICBOOKS

INSIDE:
A CHRISTMAS REP OFF! ARRG!
ALSO: THE TOP PICKS!

With our success building, we don't walk to rock the boat, so you won't see too much editorial or design change, but watch for a few nice surprises.

I don't know about you, but it has been so exciting for me to watch **Vantage** evolve from a little newsletter into a magazine with respect and influence throughout the industry. What we've accomplished in these past several months is amazing, and we couldn't have done it without the support of you, the reader.

To get an idea of how humble our beginnings were, take a gander at one of our old black and white covers reprinted here. This was the issue where we picked **X-O Manowar** #14, which did quite well at the time.

We've come a long way, eh? Wait 'til you see where we go with **Vantage Comic & Card Picks!**

Vantage regrets that Extreme Studios was unable to provide us with the Liefeld interview that was scheduled for this issue. We hope to bring it to you at a later date.

PRINT RUNS REMAIN SMALL

Print runs for all publishers remain low, with speculators gone from the market. Of course, the irony here is that the best time to speculate is when print runs are low.

The following numbers are all estimates based on **Vantage** sources. **X-Men** #37, the number one book for August according to Capital City Distribution, had advance orders for only 350,000 copies total. **Spawn** #24 comes in at a close second with about 325,000 copies.

What's amazing here is that only months ago **Spawn** was selling a million copies a month. The numbers for August are consistent with other recent months, indicating that the monthly top comic, whatever it is, now sells about a third of what it once did! **Vantage** expects numbers to eventually bounce back to higher levels.

The rest of the Capital City top ten and our estimates: 3) **Uncanny X-Men** #317 Deluxe (325,000), 4) **Wolverine** #86 (250,000) 5) **Wetworks** #2 (250,000), 6) Gen 13 #0 (225,000) 7) **WildC.A.T.s** #13 (200,000), **Batman** #0 (200,000) 9) **Superman** # (200,000) 10) **Adventures of Superman** # (200,000)

The low print runs on the DC #0s can or bode well for them from a long term perspe tive. Retailers have been reporting that Ze Hour is doing well on the short term to

Web of Spider-Man #117 (Deluxe), th start of the clone storyline, came in at a lo #33/125,000. **Web** and **Spectacular** have sir lar numbers, though **Amazing Spider-Man** #24/150,000. This is still not very high f something as big as the clone story (thou **Vantage** wishes the artwork for the Spide books were better).

The biggest hitters from Malibu and Valia were, respectively, **Ultraforce** #1 at #66/80,0 and **Timewalker** #1 at #65/80,000. **Shi** came in at an impressive #81/70,000.

TRIUMPHANT DOESN'T TRIUMPH

Triumphant has ceased publication of all titles as of late July, according to sources close to the company. Triumphant is best known for titles like Scavengers, The Chromium Man, and Doctor Chaos.

***Vantage** called the company's phone line and fax line repeatedly in hopes of obtaining a comment. There was no answer.*

Triumphant is a division of Corporate Kingdom Holdings, co-owned by Adam Post and Eric Shefferman. **Vantage** called the company's phone line and fax line repeatedly in hopes of obtaining a comment. There was no answer.

In recent months, Triumphant had been negotiating with investors in what now appears to have been a bid to save the company. In fact, rumors of problems at Triumphant have been circulating for some time.

John Riley, writer of most Triumphant titles, says he resigned a month before production was stopped, due to "non-payment," according to sources close to the situation. Greg Fox, artist on **Doctor Chaos** also insisted, "I am owed quite a bit of money." Susan Dorne, the letterer on almost all recent Triumphant books, seemed most upset, "I did the work in good faith. Now I'm owed in the area of $4,000." Dorne said that she is now considering legal action.

Greg Fox said that Triumphant has informe him that publication of all titles has ceased, "at le for the time being, but it sounds like it's pretty p manent." Dorne said, "They shut the doors a closed up shop." Fox said that Triumphant staff told him that orders were low and that they simp "don't have the money" to continue publishin

Dorne said that she was "worried for qu awhile," but that she nonetheless continued wo for the company with "invoices building up massiv ly." She added, "I feel quite indignant and upse did all this work for nothing. They repeatedly to me over and over they had no intention of goi out of business ... that there was no chance at a feel betrayed, depressed, and annoyed."

Fox sounded unhappy on the phone, sayi he was "still in shock." Fox added with an air of appointment, "Doctor Chaos was a good boo

"They repeatedly told me over and over they had no intention of going out of business ... that there was n chance at all. I feel betrayed, depressed, and annoyed."

WIZARD™ LIST SAID TO BE INCORRECT!

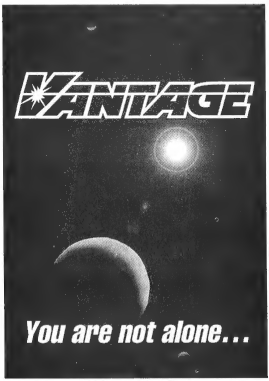
Wizard: The Guide to Comics™ #37 has printed on the first page of its news column an incorrect list of which Image creators are going to be doing which books during "X-Month,"

"Shadowhawk #0, Savage Dragon #13, and of course Cyberforce #8 could easily have improperly low print runs."

according to Image Comics sources.

"X-Month" takes place in September when each of the six Image creators swap books. In **Wizard**'s lead news story for its September 1994 issue, **Wizard** reported that they had learned from inside sources that **The Savage Dragon** would be handled by McFarlane, **WildC.A.T.S.** by Silvestri, **Spawn** by Valentino, **Youngblood** by Lee, **Shadowhawk** by Liefeld, and **Cyberforce** by Larsen.

"They have one right on the list," said Jim Valentino, the creator-owner of **Shadowhawk**. "All of the rest are wrong. Wizard acted in an irresponsible manner with this lead story," he added. Image Publicist Kyle Zimmerman agreed, "It's not true, unless



Everybody's a Comedian

Vantage Publisher Rob Golub asked Homage Studios for their comments. Their fax back to us:

"Okay Rob. Here's the official list. Don't show it to **Wizard***!*

Todd McFarlane:	*Sugar and Spice*
Jim Lee:	*Sgt. Rock*
Rob Liefeld:	*Sachs & Violens*
Jim Valentino:	*Youngblood*
Erik Larsen:	*What Th?*
Mark Silvestri:	*Milk and Cheese"*

There you have it. Sugar and Spice. We should have known.

they hit a few by mistake." Jeff Mariotte, marketing representative for Jim Lee's Homage Studios, also confirmed that the list was largely incorrect.

When **Vantage** asked Valentino if he might for any reason switch to do **Spawn** as **Wizard** indicated on the list he replied, "Everybody's locked in to what they are doing." In a confident tone he insisted, "The book I'm doing is **Youngblood**."

According to distributor sources, Jim Lee is to do **The Savage Dragon #13**, Larsen is to do **WildC.A.T.s. #14**, Liefeld is to do **Shadowhawk #0**, Valentino is to do **Yougblood #9**, Silvestri is to do **Spawn #25**. And our top pick is **Cyberforce #8** by Todd McFarlane.

As we write this, distributors are making arrangements to try to correct the problem created by this misinformation. However, even as announcements are made regarding which creator is doing which book and as retailers are allowed to change their orders, confusion over the situation should still run high. Many retailers will not change their orders due to general confusion, mistrust, or disgust with the situation. **Shadowhawk #0, Savage Dragon #13**, and of course **Cyberforce #8** could easily have improperly low print runs.

We suggest you be at your local shop on comic day.

Wizard ™ & © 1994 Wizard Press

LONG-TERM PICKS: NOSTALGIA OF TOMORROW

Beauty and the Beast and **The Little Mermaid** are "animated blockbusters," says *The New York Times*. "I've never seen anything like it," says Joel Siegel of ABC's *Good Morning America*. And for Siskel and Ebert, those two thumbs are pointing north for sure.

Modern Disney animated films have swept the nation, creating a huge instant nostalgia. Everywhere, Disney stores are cashing in on the craze. Want a Jasmine dress? A Little Mermaid tooth brush?

*Early **Mickey Mouse** and **Donald Duck** comic books are worth thousands...The nostalgia creates the demand.*

Anything you could possibly imagine is out there and being gobbled up at light speed. Families across America feel the new Disney stars, such as Jasmine from Aladdin, are personal friends.

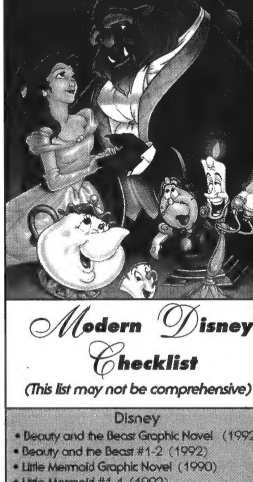
Aladdin earned over $215 million dollars at the box office and there are now well over 3000 licensed Aladdin products created for sale to consumers. Since the movie went to video, over twenty-five million copies of the video have been sold in the United States. That's sold — not rented — and that's one copy for every ten Americans!

The story behind **Return of Jafar** is perhaps most telling. Without the same quality of animation and without Robin Williams, you might guess this video sequel to the **Aladdin** movie would be dead on arrival. Add the fact that this was an experiment — as the first feature from a major studio to go straight to video as a sequel to a theatrical original — and things aren't looking good, right?

Yeah, right. **Return of Jafar**, out for only months now, has already sold more than seven million copies and **Variety** reports it to be one of the ten-best-selling videos ever.

The bottom line here is simple: Jasmine, Mufasa, and Ariel are the Mickey Mouses of tomorrow. Maybe you grew up with Mickey and Donald. Today's kids and young adults will remember today's Disney heroes. Already proven products in the malls, the new emotional commitment of America to these new Disney characters seems almost destined to grow with time.

Already, an **Aladdin** TV cartoon is planned for Fall, as if we needed that to convince us. If you aren't a big Ariel or Mufasa fan, ask the person next to you. He or she is.



Modern Disney Checklist

(This list may not be comprehensive)

Disney

- Beauty and the Beast Graphic Novel (199
- Beauty and the Beast #1-2 (1992)
- Little Mermaid Graphic Novel (1990)
- Little Mermaid #1-4 (1992)

Marvel

- Beauty and the Beast #1-up (1994)
- The Little Mermaid #1-up (1994)
- Aladdin #1-up (1994)

Early **Mickey Mouse** and **Donald Du** comic books are worth thousands. Wh Because the people who grew up with the collect the current books today... to recapt their childhood... to remember the good days. The nostalgia creates the deman

Someday, today's Disney characters will a part of America's memories. These aren't pl for those of you with short attention spa However, if you're looking for a book to away for twenty years, look no further. You may have come to the right place.

Tekno-Comix Knows the Way to the Retailer's Heart (And They've Got Money, Too!)

In a bold move, Big Entertainment has announced that their first three issues, Leonard Nimoy's **Primortals** #1, Neil Gaiman's **Mr. Hero - The Newmatic Man** #1, and Gene Roddenberry's **Lost Universe** #1, are returnable for direct market retailers.

Direct market retailers, the five thousand comic shops scattered across the world, may give back any unsold copies of these comics for a refund. This move is almost unheard of in the direct market, where retailers must BUY their comics "directly" at about half off.

General retailers get their comics on consignment instead. That is, they get to give them back and without paying for them if they don't sell them. This may sound like a better deal at first, but keep in mind that the retailer's cut per book is usually much lower, due to the high cost of producing, shipping, and counting unsold books.

With this move, Big Entertainment is putting its money where its mouth is, by showing that they are willing to risk huge losses on their product to get their name out there. **Vantage** thinks this is a great idea, especially since we did it first, with a recent issue of **Vantage: Press Release Review**. Of course, **Vantage** did it on a much smaller scale.

If this doesn't convince you there's big money behind Big (how many times can we get away with that joke? Sheesh!), try this on for size: Our sources tell us that Tekno-Comix has a one million dollar advertising and promotions budget. In other words, look for something on the scale of the Ultraverse launch. Wow

IS OLIVER ISABEDRA THE NEXT BILL TUCCI?

It seems like only yesterday **Vantage** was hanging out by the fax machine when artwork from little-known Bill Tucci came through. It was **Vantage** that gave Bill Tucci his first national publicity, causing the ripples in the water that helped to make him the huge success he is today.

Vantage has since continued our search for young new aspiring artists who deserve more publicity in a competitive market. We looked, and looked, and we didn't find. Faxes came in that said, "To those hanging out by the fax machine," or "**Vantage:** This is even better than **Shi!**"

To all of you aspiring artists who faxed us, we thank you and wish you the best of luck. We may still at some point give you publicity! Keep up the good work!

One day, we were hanging our by the mail box, and we saw it. We can't guarantee that this book will be as big as **Shi** #1, but we can guarantee that it deserves to be, and that it could be. The book? **Aster** #1, drawn by newcomer Oliver Isabedra, and due out soon from Entity comics.

Oliver Isabedra is a twenty-two year old Filipino with no formal art training. That's right, working only with inborn skills, young Oliver is responsible for the blockbuster artwork that graces this page.

Oliver and the entire **Aster** team live in the Philippines. These creator-owners have never even been to the United States, but Entity Comics Publisher Don Chin discovered them as part of his ongoing talent search! And what a jewel he found!

With a fine-lined flair that's reminiscent of McFarlane and Perez, but that's dearly not just a swipe, Oliver's artwork is a pleasure to look at. **Aster's** Filipino team is made up of Oliver, Ronnie Roxas (plot/layouts), Narciso Jun Roxas (script), and Billy Lim-It (Editor/Co-Publisher).

Entity Comics has a first rate marketing plan underway, with full-color ads appearing everywhere. **Aster** #1 will blow you away with its foil-stamped Joe Lee cover and Oliver Isabedra interior, due out in October. Then, Entity Comics wisely slaps a foil-stamped Joe Quesada/Jimmy Palmiotti cover onto **Aster** #2, a move that is sure to send some people scrambling to find #1.

Aster is a Galactus-type guy who winds up on Earth fighting for the life of the gorgeously rendered Shaiana. Titles from this full-color four-issue mini-series will carry a $2.95 cover price.

For more on **Aster**, see the interview in this issue.

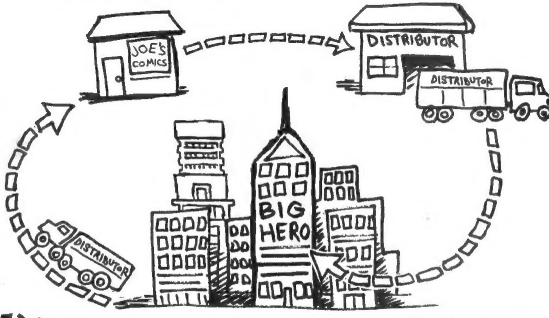
The Comic Book Market

How It All Works

A Vantage Guide

1) Joe's sends in an order for 50 ***Big Hero*** #1's.

2) Order received by distributor.



5) Big Hero sends to stores what was ordered.

4) Big Hero gets the order and prints about as many as stores, dealers, and some collectors have ordered in advance (back at step 1)

3) Distributor tells publishe how many to print.

Joe's pretty experienced and chances are he ordered what he needed– but if he was not told that *Big Hero* #1 featured the first appearance of Big Heroine, he could have too few copies, and demand could go up!

VANTAGE™

DOUBLE WHAMMY FOR *ULTRAFORCE* #2 !

Ultraforce #2 will come with two covers, split with 75% of the run featuring the cover as solicited, and 25% featuring another cover, according to sources close to Malibu Comics.

Vantage has learned that when retailers open their boxes from the distributors, they'll be surprised to find that only 75% of the books will have the cover that was solicited, with Prime walking away from the Ultraforce. The other 25% will feature only Prime on the cover against a striking white background.

Clearly, this gives **Ultraforce** #2 nice potential in the marketplace. With luck, this could be the beginning of a new Malibu winning streak.

Keep in mind that in addition to the split, **Ultraforce** #2 also has in its favor the fact that it is a #2. Historically, #2s have often been underordered, causing them to sometimes gain more market attention than #1s. Thus, even without the split, we would have made **Ultraforce** #2 a pick. The double whammy of a split and the low orders for recent #2s make this book an easy future pick with reasonable potential.

The promotion behind **Ultraforce** has been impressive. The ads have been everywhere and two very respectable sample comics were recently bagged with some other comics magazine (can't remember the name). George Perez's artwork is simply astounding and Gerard Jones' writing has been wonderful.

25% cover variant

75% cover variant

Malibu has wisely taken the sort of step we publicly suggested last issue. They are introducing a book with all four of the ingredients needed to bake the perfect comic book cake: Marketing, Art, Story, and Collectibility. (MASC! Hey, we invented an acronym! Cool! Use it everywhere.) The icing on the cake is simple: the element of surprise, which there will be plenty of, since retailers had no idea any of this was coming when they ordered **Ultraforce** #2.

Of course, not everyone will be surprised. You won't be. And readers of the regular edition of **Ultraforce** #1 might not be either. We're not sure how, but we're told there just might be some sort of tip-off to give true-blue Ultra-fans the jump on this thing. The tip-off, our sources tell us, would be hiding somewhere in the pages of **Ultraforce** #1. The tip-off is unconfirmed as we go to press.

Ultraforce #2 will also contain the origin of Atalon, with the Rogue Prime story building to a climax. Ultraforce artist George Perez told **Vantage**, "The one character that I created visually that'll hopefully have a long-term effect on the Ultraverse is Atalon, who is a major villain. Their intent at Malibu is to make him the big villain!"

Ultraforce #2 is due out in October to coincide with the Ultraverse's Prime Month promotion. Our recommendation? Be there the day it comes out.

VANTAGE QUICKIES

Rune From Saltares

As **Vantage** predicted, Javier Saltares has been scheduled to draw current issues of **Rune**. Javier begins with **Rune** #7, with the cover from powerhouse Barry-Windsor Smith.

Deep Space Nine and Next Generation

This is one of the coolest crossovers to come around in a long time. DC and Malibu each publish a separate first and second issue, for a total of four. The crossover mixes up Picard, Sisko, Cardassians, the wormhole, and much of the rest. Star Trek books have historically done well in the market. For a great read and four books that belong bagged and boarded for sure check these out: **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine/Star Trek: The Next Generation** #1-2 (Malibu), **Star Trek: The Next Generation/Star Trek: Deep Space Nine** #1-2 (DC).

Flash Countdown Continues

The countdown to **Flash** #100 continues with the Terminal Velocity storyline. In **Flash** #96, DC says, "the chilling secret of Flash's near-future threatens to tear Wally and Linda apart." Plus, more of the "new Flash," Impulse.

Mad Monkey Press

This small publisher has been making re inroads into what many call "The Dark Ho Market." The market for the esoteric is small, b there's no doubt it's out there. Mad Monkey's lat

...You've gotta see thi artwork up close. We'v simply never seen any thing like it.Keep an ey on Black Raven #1.

work is pretty spedal stuff. **Black Raven** #1 is o twenty-four pages for $2.50, but you've gotta s this artwork up close. We've simply never se anything like it. Keep an eye on **Black Raven**

Mark Texiera to Join Malibu

Vantage has learned from inside sources t Mark Texiera will be joining Bravura. Texiera is c rently working on a new title which is alrec scheduled to join Malibu's family of Bravura ti Texiera's work is always an eye-pleaser. In fa Tex is a master of the grim and the gritty. Vanta looks forward to this book with great anticipati

Silver Moon Signs Up Harlan Ellison

Harlan Ellison will be developing the plot Silver Moon Comics' first monthly comic bo Ellison is one of the world's most noted science tion writers, having published more than 60 bo and having won countless awards, including World Fantasy Lifetime Achievement Awa

Silver Moon Comics, a division of Full Mo Entertainment, continues to gear up for their 19 comic launch. Full Moon is the video produc company responsible for putting out popular films like **Trancers**. Also now coming out from Moon: the new straight-to-video movie, **Obliv** written by comics' very own Peter David.

Bishop and Rogue Miniseries

In addition to the **Bishop** miniseries due soon, **Vantage** has learned that Marvel is wor on a **Rogue** miniseries. Clearly, Marvel seeks to low in the footsteps of its prior, highly-succe minis. **Bishop** will be a Marvel Select title (see page).

VANTAGE QUICKIES (continued)

Marvel Select Titles

Marvel Select is a new Marvel banner indicating higher-quality printing methods for certain Marvel comics. The lucky few, which includes the **Bishop** mini, the new **Tales to Astonish**, and **Prince Valiant**, will feature cardstock covers and coated interiors. Plus, there'll be higher-end color separations, which will create crisp color distinctions.

Vantage Offers Unique Retailer Incentives

Vantage will soon begin offering retailer incentives — limited signed items for every 10 to 15 copies of Vantage ordered. This new **Vantage Retailer Incentive Program** is being made available through all major distributors.

"We wanted to do something different — not just offer a gold **Vantage** for every 50 books ordered or something like that," remarked Publisher Rob Golub. "We feel, if we're going to do this, let's be innovative. Let's offer limited signed items from the major comic and card publishers, with **Vantage** certificates of authenticity. That's something retailers can really use."

Vantage market research has shown that its fan base is a scattered, international, highly-devoted group made up of a handful of customers per store, along with a great many individual store owners and show dealers. In an effort to encourage retailers to put more copies of **Vantage** on the shelf, the **Vantage Retailer Incentive Program** will offer rewards for purchasing relatively low quantities, such as 15, 12, or even 10 copies, and multiples of those amounts. "Any retailer who places a bet on us deserves a helping hand from **Vantage**," said Golub.

What will these signed items be? "I can't say yet," said Golub, "but trust me, you'll like 'em. I wouldn't be surprised if people who have never even ordered **Vantage** before start off with twelve or fifteen copies just to get the signed comic book!"

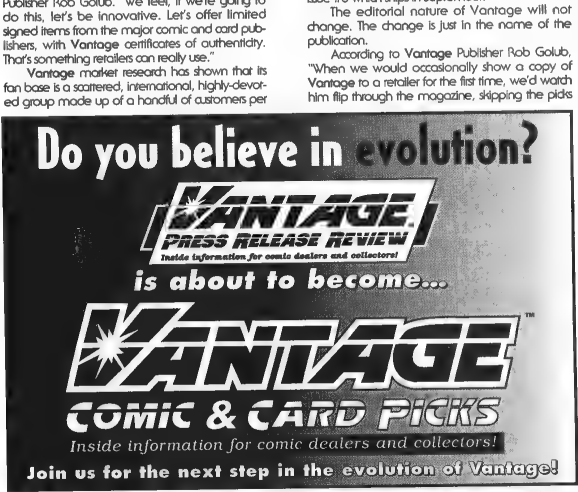
Anyone with questions about the program or anything else of the **Vantage** variety is invited to call the office at 414-545-3646.

Vantage Comic & Card Picks

Vantage: Press Release Review will change its name to **Vantage Comic & Card Picks** as of issue #8 which ships in September.

The editorial nature of Vantage will not change. The change is just in the name of the publication.

According to **Vantage** Publisher Rob Golub, "When we would occasionally show a copy of **Vantage** to a retailer for the first time, we'd watch him flip through the magazine, skipping the picks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VANTAGE QUICKIES (continued)

page. We're afraid he's missing the point. The picks have always been our focus — our recent design changes on the picks page and our new name ... these are intended to send the message that **Vantage** is all about picks and inside info."

Vantage may, from time to time, still print press releases. Vantage Editor Steve Asvitt added, "From Day One, **Vantage** has been totally customer oriented. Customers seem to prefer inside info, picks, and interviews to the press releases. If that's what they want, that's what they'll get!"

Punisher: Year One to Contain Origin Prelude

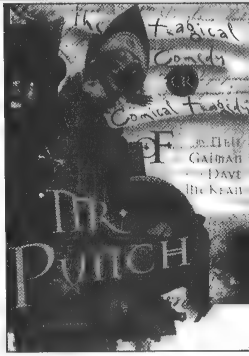
This new four-issue limited series examines the events that lead to the origin of the Punisher. For the first time ever, learn what really happened that fateful day in Central Park which resulted in the evolution of Frank Castle into the Punisher.

Hulk 2099 Due Out!

Hulk 2099 #1 finally comes out in October. The future proves to be pretty tough for the new, uglier greenskin, when he meets his match with the 2099 villain, Draco. This one's another Marvel Select title.

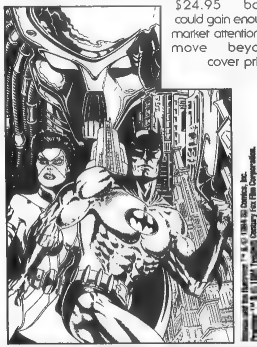
Batman vs. Predator II: Bloodmatch

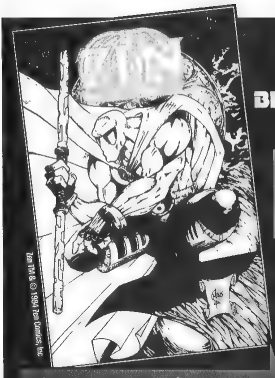
Batman is "off-limits" to the Predator race, but one young glory-seeker can't help but pit his skills against the legend of the Bat! DC and Dark Horse present this second-round battle between the Dark Knight and the dark alien race.



Mr. Punch

If you've got money to burn, this is the one read. A $24.95 graphic novel, 96 pages, limi to 15,000 copies, written by Neil Gaiman, illustrated by Dave McKean, this book offer hauntingly lyrical tale of childhood wonder adult pain. Gaiman is so hot that even $24.95 bo could gain enou market attention move beyo cover pri





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ARE WE CRAZY???

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Signature Series

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With all that raving about Zen last issue, we figured the least we could do is make a Zen book available to you via the *Vantage Signature Series.* Forget about the gold foil enhanced cover, that's the least of it...

Each of the two hundred copies of *Zen Intergalactic Ninja — Starquest #1* is signed by penciler Bill Maus (who, by the way, draws much like Todd McFarlane... we kid you not!) and by Entity Comics Publisher Don Chin. Signed by the artist and THE MAN at Entity! Grab a piece of Zen before the big movie!

Vantage has made special arrangements to subsidize the costs of producing signed comics — we are passing the savings on to you, our valued customers! Don't ever pay $30-$60 for a signed book again! *Vantage Signature Series* comics are signed and strictly limited to unfathomably low quantities, and are truly affordable! The catch? There's two of 'em:

1) You must use the coupon provided– no copies;

2) If we receive over 200 orders we will return checks at random (sorry, we have no choice)!

Offer expires November 15, 1994.

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Vantage: Press Release Review is the world's only magazine for people who are really serious about the comic book marketplace! We don't cover what happened three Tuesdays ago. Oh no, ***Vantage*** puts it on the line and makes for-real, logical predictions about the future of comics! Get serious. Get ***Vantage***.

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This is our most popular subscription option! Each month, before we send ***Vantage*** to the printer we will mail to you an advance transcript of our comic picks section! This special advance edition of our picks reaches subscribers before each month's advance-order deadline! That's right – get your comics at a discount by ordering in advance and watch your savings make up for the low ***Vantage*** subscription price! Plus, you'll get our inside buzz issue days before anyone else! In addition to the Market Guide (the first several pages of this magazine), we throw in our most interesting and most important articles for that month. This "sneak preview" service brings you the best of ***Vantage***, before your advance-order deadline!

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Canadian customers same price U.S., timeliness not guaranteed. Other foreign, price is $69.50 U.S per year for just magazine or just transcript, or $95.50 U.S. per year for magazine plus transcript, timeliness not guaranteed.

THE RIGHT ARTWORK FOR THE RIGHT CHARACTERS

The non-sports card market existed prior to 1992, but it was the Marvel Masterpiece cards issued that year that legitimized the market and got collectors excited about single cards in a manner that hadn't been seen before.

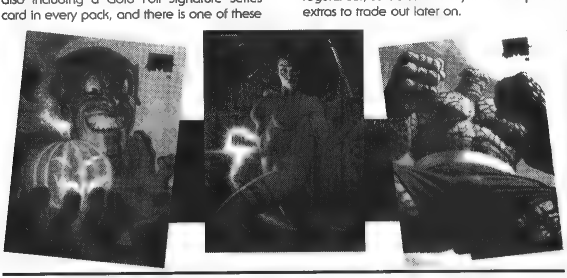
The follow-up 1993 set was not as successful, partly due to the uneven artwork (multiple artists replaced the single artist who did the first set), and partly due to the disappointing chase cards.

Fleer obviously took notes, because all the obvious problems are fixed for the 1994 Marvel Masterpieces card set. The brothers Hildebrandt were hired to do all the artwork and early samples have been impressive, to say the least.

All over fandom, the nine-card and four-card promo sheets have alerted collectors that something special is on the way and demand is already fired-up. Better still, two levels of chase cards feature the popular Power Blast format from the Flair card set, and Holographic Foil Cards. The special cards will feature the most popular of Marvel's characters (Wolverine, Sabretooth, Spider-Man, Gambit, etc.) instead of unknowns. Fleer is also including a Gold Foil Signature Series card in every pack, and there is one of these for every card in the set. That's right, "Commando Collectors" will be able to get a complete 140-card set of just the Signature cards — but it will take four boxes to do it! And, if that's not enough, "Killer Commandos" will find the Holographic Foils in three variations, similar to The Amazing Spider-Man cards.

The suggested retail price of the packs is up from 1993, but there are more cards per pack. The packs will cost half the price the Flair cards demanded, so there should be little resistance by consumers.

The 1993 print run was limited to the size of the 1992 run, and allocations to dealers occurred (which was fortunate for the dealers, since many boxes are still sitting around, available for original cost). There has been no announcement on limits for the new series and Fleer has yet to allocate any Marvel cards. It's therefore likely that the cards will be printed to dealer orders. This permits an oversupply, but be sure to lock-down your first box early! There will be enough cards in a box to easily produce two 140-card sets. Collation should be good for these cards. The poor collation of the Flair set was a result of the additional packaging operations to get the cards in the special boxes. Vantage expects heavier demand for the chase cards than for the regular set, so be sure to lay in a stockpile of extras to trade out later on.



Marvel Characters & Artwork™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group 1994

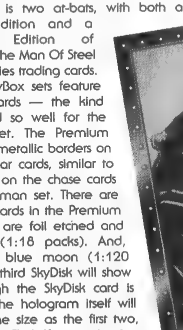
VANTAGE Card Picks

- Marvel Masterpieces 1994
- Superman: The Man Of Steel Platinum Series Chase Cards
- Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back Tin Card Set
- Magic: The Gathering Fallen Empires Booster Cards
- Magic: The Gathering Insert Cards

OVERSIZED, FRAMED, AND UNDERPRINTED?

Batting .500 might be great in baseball, but it's not an enviable average in cards. This batting average is how well Superman has done with his last two card sets: a grand slam home run with his death, and a weak grounder to first with his return. His new card set actually is two at-bats, with both a Premium Edition and a Collector's Edition of Superman: The Man Of Steel Platinum Series trading cards.

Both SkyBox sets feature oversized cards — the kind that worked so well for the Sandman set. The Premium Edition has metallic borders on all 90 regular cards, similar to the borders on the chase cards in the Sandman set. There are four chase cards in the Premium Edition that are foil etched and embossed (1:18 packs). And, once in a blue moon (1:120 packs), the third SkyDisk will show up. Although the SkyDisk card is oversized, the hologram itself will be the same size as the first two, and features Clark Kent turning into Superman. (A source indicates that the fourth SkyDisk will be coming out in December as part of a Vertigo set.) Downside: these puppies are expensive ($4 a pack, which means it will cost $60 to put a set together!). Upsides: nice chase cards you can't get anywhere else and a print run which is lower than the Doomsday cards.



Superman™ & © DC Comics 1994

The Collector's Edition is much cheaper — about $1.25 a pack, making it much more affordable. The chase cards are six Spectra Etch cards, occurring with a high frequency (about five per box). Downside: almost nobody will want the Collector's cards once they've seen the Premium cards. Upsides: the chase cards from the Collector's Edition aren't in the Premium boxes, and the common cards are cheap (expect to see sets for under $10 almost immediately).

For dealers seeking price appreciation, the Premium Edition is a real gamble — the chase cards will be expensive and highly sought-after, but the sets will be so expensive that few people will want to buy one. The Collector's Edition offers a better chance—break up a few boxes and sell the sets really cheap, then sell the six chase cards at a more leisurely pace.

To keep the Superman: MOS cards together, don't overlook the metallic embossed binder, which includes the proper sheets to store the set.

TRULY METALLIC

Rather than just having metallic borders, the Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back tin set from Metallic Images contains cards that are made completely from metal. This is the second in a series of these cards, following on the heels of the Star Wars: A New Hope tin set. The first set did moderately well, but this set should do even better — production is limited to less than half of the first set (19,950 versus 49,900 the first time out). Given the modest selling rate of the first tin set, a lower pri

run is called for — but **Vantage** thinks that the planned level is too low. Grab a set for yourself quickly and give some thought to an extra set — the prices can only go up as the countdown to the next Star Wars movie begins.

Topps is coming out with a quarterly magazine, The Star Wars Galaxy, which will be available almost everywhere in a newsstand edition. Collectors will want to be sure to pick up a copy of the direct-market version of the first issue — an exclusive Topps Finest Star Wars card will be bagged with the comic store edition. Since this looks like a chase card, it should sell for a premium to those unlucky enough to buy the magazine with their groceries.

GAMING CARDS

You simply can't attend a gaming convention lately without stumbling over people playing card games, a phenomenon fueled by Magic: The Gathering, where two players take on the role of wizards, casting spells against each other until one has been destroyed. The original game was put out by Wizards of the Coast (WOTC) and its success caught everyone by surprise.

Part of the success was the result of a novel way of selling the cards for the game: instead of purchasing a game which came with a complete set of cards, players purchased a starter deck and then had to purchase booster packs to get additional cards. Some of the cards were less common than others and some were extremely rare. Naturally, these rare cards were some of the most powerful. The cards were not numbered and initially there was no list of them, which made for some exciting times for collectors (in every pack you could hope for a spell which nobody else in your area had, giving you the upper hand in the game). The number of cards each player can use in the game is limited, but the selection of those cards could influence the game a great deal. Thus, there was a feeding frenzy as players tried to complete their sets. The fact that a complete set of cards could influence the outcome of tournaments led to players spending lots and lots of money

on cards.

Eventually there were expansion sets, and, in every instance, these sold out quickly. The original set has been reprinted, but the backs were changed slightly, giving the original cards a value to collectors who were more interested in having the cards than in playing the game. October should see the release of the newest expansion set, Fallen Empires, and **Vantage** feels certain that its sales should mirror those of previous expansion sets. When orders for the last expansion set were higher than WOTC thought they should be, dealer orders were cut in half across the board, resulting in many dealers limiting the number of packs each customer could buy, and quickly doubling the value of the packs. Given the need to acquire these cards to stay competitive, active players will have little choice but to pick up the cards — and prices for single cards and packs should reflect this as yet unabated demand.

Completists are also warned to keep an eye out for "free" Magic cards: a coupon in a paperback book (Magic: The Gathering — Arena) good for two exclusive cards; a Michael Whelan card given out at DragonCon in Atlanta; two cards in Advance Comics in October; and two different cards in each of five gaming magazines (Challenge, Pyramid, Scrye, Shadis, and White Wolf). However we hear that plans to make these "free" cards into limited exclusive for each magazine have been shelved. In any case, look for Magic to continue to grow rapidly.

The idea of a collectible card game was picked-up by TSR, and their entry into the arena is Spellfire. The sales of their game have been good, although the mania that hit Magic: The Gathering hasn't set in yet. October brings the release of their

Dragonlance expansion set. As with the original booster packs, the first-edition Dragonlance packs will each contain one of 25 special cards which will not be available in subsequent printings, helping to push early demand for these packs. Magic players who have spent vast sums of money on their decks are understandably resistant to Spellfire, but new card players are drawn to it because they are not at a major disadvantage (it is still cheap, easy, and almost fun to put together a complete Spellfire set). As long as enough players in your area are picking up Spellfire, this expansion set (which trades on the highly recognizable Dragonlance trademark) should sell out quickly, so be sure to pick up your cards early.

It is likely that numerous other collectible card games will be along shortly, and not all are fated to succeed (we've already seen Battle cards fall miserably), but there are some that will appeal to a completely different crowd. Shipping soon from Decipher is the Star Trek: Next Generation Collectible Card Game. Perhaps because of the Star Trek license, this game is more expensive than the others we've seen on the market, but it will also tap a market that Magic and Spellfire may not have reached. In addition to the normal starter sets and expansion packs, Decipher is offering a Factory Set which will contain "special premiums." This is the set that is most likely to appeal to the non-gaming Star Trek collectors and should not be overlooked!

THE DISNEY MOVIE-CARD CONNECTION

Hot on the heels of the success of The Lion King cards, SkyBox is bringing out Snow White Series 2 cards. As with The Lion King, it's the chase cards that will be pushing the success of this offering, not the 90-card set. A source inside SkyBox indicates that the chase cards will be distributed one per 18 packs. SkyBox is aiming these cards at the young kids who are attracted to the famous Disney version of the fairy tale, rather than collectors. This strategy poses a real problem for the many Disney collectors who AREN young kids — those who will want the com plete nine-card foil embossed chase s (similar to The Lion King chases) whi includes the Seven Dwarves, Snow Whit and the Queen. Given the tie-in to th upcoming release of the movie on video f the first time, Vantage expects demand f the chase cards could be sizzling. Collecto would be well advised to get their cha cards early before the market realizes ju how rare these cards really are

SELLING A LEGEND

Despite a lack of commercial succe late in his career, Jack Kirby is undeniab one of the most important artists who ev worked in the comics field. After his rece death, not one but two "tribute" card sets c coming out.

Comic Images has purchased the rig to many of Jack's unpublished works, a Jack Kirby: The Unpublished Archives w bring us a 90-card set featuring this art. addition to Jack's artwork, several of t cards will feature artwork from current art in the field who pay tribute to his creatio Chromium chase cards, villain car Medallion cards, and 24-karat gold signatu cards complete the set.

A more obvious set is offered by 2 Century Archives: A Comic Art Tribute to Jo Kirby. These cards feature not only unpu lished art, but some published art as w The five DiamondChrome chase cards ho been done by surprise artists and featu characters created by the King, rather th artwork he himself did.

While Vantage applauds these two se and hopes for more, it's not clear if a larg enough audience for these cards exi Younger collectors do not appreciate Kirb style, preferring the modern look of Imc artwork. Older collectors do not usually c lect comic book art cards. Be sure to ch out the cards to see if you might enjoy a s but don't expect prices to escalate ever the supply disappears.

QUICK NOTES

Halloween is coming, and that may give Universal Monsters cards from Topps a second life. The packs will contain a better collation than they did the first time around and will arrive just in time to give them to little ghosts and goblins that knock on your door. You'll probably want to keep the chase cards for yourself, though.

Not to be left out of the season, FPG is bringing out Bernie Wrightson Series Two: More Macabre Trading Cards. In addition to his usual monstrous artwork, we also get cover art from Captain Stern on some of the cards — and this time the set is full color.

Gil Elvgren's Calendar Pinups 2 is aimed at more mature audiences, particularly those who enjoyed the first set of cards. Once again we get calendar pictures from the Forties and Fifties, with the usual Comic Images chase card selection (six "OmniChrome", a three-card subset, and a Medallion card). These should have more appeal to non-comic collectors than any of the other sets offered this month.

Cornerstone Communications continues to offer cards rooted in Japanese Animation. This time they will be shipping Series One Robot Carnival, a set of 81 cards from nine artists. If you were pleased with the Akira cards, this set is for you.

The last note is on a movie for which Vantage has absolutely, positively, no information. Stargate cards from Collecr-A-Card (the folks who brought out the Coca-Cola cards) feature pictures from a fantasy movie in which Kurt Russell and James Spader somehow encounter the ancient gods of Egypr. Once again, the gamble is based on the movie — check them out early if you can, as supplies will no doubt be very limited.

SPECULATIVE CORNER

Almost lost in the shuffle this month are the Aliens/Predator Universe cards from Topps. There are no movies imminent, the Dark Horse comics aren't as red-hot as they once were, and most dealers will probably just order a few boxes and hope they sell out. Some of the most respected artists in the comics field are supplying artwork for this project, including covers from the various Dark Horse books. And included in the 90-card set is a 15-card subset that tells a short story about a band of Colonial Marines . The six Topps Finest chase cards will clearly be in demand, so pick them up early if you can.

What everybody may be missing is the potential audience for these cards! The recent Aliens vs. Predator: Deadliest of the Species comic series had to be rewritten after the first few issues came out because of the number of complaints about the language and violence — the comics may be selling better to the eight- to twelve-year-olds than anybody else! Since this age group is more likely to collect cards than older comic readers, Topps may have an under-ordered hit card set on their hands.

Aliens and Predator™ & © 20th Century Fox 1994

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COMICS ARE FOR READING First!

By Rich Keller

TOP VANTAGE READING PICK OF THE MONTH

EXILE EARTH
River City Comics
$1.95

Adam Sheppard of Indiana is your average twenty-something type of guy: he goes to the movies, hangs out at the record store, has a girlfriend, and has dreams like everyone else. Especially the flying dream. You know, the one where you suddenly have the ability to fly around your town?

Oh, there is one tiny thing different about Adam: That flying dream — well it actually came true. Just your average mid-American guy, huh?

Thus the story begins of Exile Earth, a comic by the new creative team of writer Matt Press and penciler Art Lyon.

This is a must-read book because it's so different from what you usually see coming from the major publishers. For instance, when Adam Sheppard discovers he can fly, he doesn't spend the next 5 or 10 issues determining whether he should use his new power for good or evil. Basically, once he gets over the initial shock of it, he just continues to see what the limits of his powers are — using the ability to get somewhere if he's late. He's neither a hero nor a villain, he just... is. (Ooo, very existential.) The only thing Sheppard decides is that his flying power is better than taking public transportation. Press writes this portion of the comic so well that we in the audience tend to go, "Yeah, I'd probably decide that way, too."

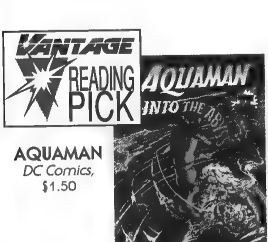
"This is a must-read book because it's so different"

The dream and these powers aren't just coincidence though. It turns out that in a previous life Adam was an alien from a highly-advanced race. In addition, there's another human being who, like Adam, is from that same race and blames Adam for the death of another alien. Gosh, and I thought it was pretty quiet in the Midwest.

I wouldn't consider this a "super-hero" book per se. True, there seems to be a villain somewhere in the book. True, the main character does have a paranormal ability. But, if you read through it, and you will over and

EXILE Earth ™ & © 1994 River City Publications

over again, you can tell that Press has placed many more elements of science fiction into it than the standard hero/villain scenario. Throw in a little mystery ('Who's the other alien? What's the extent of Adam's powers?) and you have a book that you can't wait to pick up every month.



AQUAMAN
DC Comics,
$1.50

Straight out: Peter David is one of the most prolific comic writers in the industry right now. He's run the gamut, covering merry mutants, green behemoths, and starship captains. Wherever he takes his pen, he brings his own unique mix of action, humor, and mature, topical story telling. Now he brings his talents back over to DC Comics, where he chronicles the new adventures of Aquaman.

Aquaman ™ & © 1994 DC Comics, Inc.

David is no stranger to the life of the former King of Atlantis. Earlier this year, he scripted the mini-series Aquaman: Time & Tide, which examined some of his past adventures and gave readers some additional insight into why Aquaman is the moody, angry character he is today. Now, in this new monthly series, David examines Aquaman's present psyche and looks towards his post-Zero Hour career. In t process, he creates a very readable book.

First off, David doesn't redefine the ent history of Aquaman, or his purpose in the Universe. As a matter of fact, he incorpora some very familiar aspects of the Aquam mythos into the first episode: Aqual (change this guy's name, I mean if D Grayson's twenty-something now, Aqual must be the same comics age) and the in mous Aquacave.

The only thing different is Aquaman's a tude. True, he's always been a moody ch acter, but David adds an edge to that moo iness. When we find him he's unshaven a long-haired. He mopes around t Aquacave, basically not giving a dolph butt about what goes on around him. (dolphins even have butts?) And when son one, namely Aqualad, asks him wh wrong, Aquaman basically blows him He's basically tired of saving the planet, a by saying that, David makes Aquaman m human. In other words, according to Dav even super-heroes have their bad days.

In addition, with Peter David, you ne know what he will add to a story to surp the reader. For example, in a future episo the Finned One will team up with a cha ter who's home is the water... LOBO!? N If this doesn't throw Aquaman head first the mainstream of the DC Universe, I d know what will.

"Even super-heroes have their bad days

The Next *Shi*?

*Hot new artist Oliver Isabedra (who says he is a **Vantage** fan) provided **Vantage** with this rare interview, all the way from the Philippines! He's just twenty-two years old, living thousands of miles from the U.S., and has never attended art school — but boy can this guy draw! Is **Aster** from Entity Comics the next **Shi**? For more on **Aster** see the article in the Market Guide!*

Aster TM & © 1994 Fractal Universe

Aster artwork TM & © 1994 Fractal Universe

VANTAGE: Are people into American comics in your country?

ISABEDRA: Very much, especially yuppies who have the money to collect a lot of titles, collecting American comic books is an expensive hobby to the average Filipino.

VANTAGE: Are there stores for just American comics?

ISABEDRA: As far as I can remember, there was already an existing comics specialty store as long as ten years ago, but it was not until about four years ago that C.A.T.S. Collectibles opened up shop. It really professionalized the industry over here. People became aware of it and learned that comic books are not just for kids anymore. After that, in the past two years alone, about a dozen stores opened up, but almost all of them are located in Metro Manila.

VANTAGE: Are you a big comics fan? What do you read?

ISABEDRA: Yes, ever since I saw George Perez's art in the **Teen Titans** when I was twelve. Currently, I rea **Sandman**, the Homage books fro Image, The **X-Men** and anythin drawn by George Perez. I also fin the **Zen** books interesting.

*"A local edition of the **Aster** ashcan came out in February wit a print run of only one thousand copies, and I think a few hundre found their way to the States."*

*VANTAGE: What have you previou published featuring **Aster**?*

ISABEDRA: A local edition of the **As** ashcan came out in February with print run of only one thousand copi and I think a few hundred found their w to the States. [There is an American a can that showcases the artwork. Beyo these small exceptions, **Aster** #1 will the first appearance.]

VANTAGE: What made you decide to pub in the U.S.?

ISABEDRA: **Aster** was originally planned to published locally. But Billy and Joh [Billy Lin-It, Co-Publisher and Johnny Du Marketing Director] have so much fait us that they made it possible for us to published in the States.

VANTAGE: Were you afraid you wouldn't a U.S. publisher?

ISABEDRA: No, I had faith in us and really Bill and Johnny. I tried not to worry ab it because either way they assured that they are going to find a way ev we have to self-publish. I just feel very tunate that we're with Entity.

VANTAGE: Do you feel lucky, being another country but still having the ch

to have your art seen in America?

ISABEDRA: Very, very lucky. It's been a dream of mine for so long and it's finally about to come true. I mean you always read in all the magazines about how hard it is for someone to break into the market, and for us here at Fractal Universe, this is just so unbelievable. We're just so thankful that we've been given the chance to show our work there.

VANTAGE: *I noticed the Fractal Universe logo on the ashcan. What is that?*

ISABEDRA: Ronnie and Jun [Ronnie Roxas, plots and layouts; Nardso (Jun) Roxas, scripts] came up with the Fractal Universe. They are in a better position to answer that. [The Fractal Universe will be a universe where all the titles created are inter-related, but not necessarily connected.]

VANTAGE: *Have you ever been to the U.S.?*

ISABEDRA: No. I would love to come to a convention, especially if someone else would foot the bill. Just kidding.

VANTAGE: *How did you meet your writer?*

ISABEDRA: We're friends from way back.

VANTAGE: *Are you planning to teach Economics with your economics degree from Ateneo de Manila University?*

ISABEDRA: If things go well with **Aster**, I would like to continue drawing comics in the future. When I'm much older, I'd like to start a business of my own. Currently I'm twenty-two years old.

VANTAGE: *How do you feel about having a Joe Lee cover on **Aster** #1?*

Aster artwork TM & © 1994 Fractal Universe

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ISABEDRA: It's unbelievable! I had no inkl whatsoever, then one day Billy just cal me up and told me the news. I could believe it. I thought he was kidding because he always kids around, but true. I feel deeply honored. Jae Le one of the best in the industry.

VANTAGE: *What's next after* **Aster** *#1?*

ISABEDRA: **Aster** is a four-part miniseries wi number zero coming afterwards. hope to turn it into a regular series Entity since we've got a lot of ideas **Aster.** Incidentally, we've already sta with the Horriers miniseries which exp why Aster is floating in space at beginning of **Aster** #1.

VANTAGE: *Who own the characters?*

ISABEDRA: All of us at the Fractal Universe

VANTAGE: *Have you published comics any other characters?*

ISABEDRA: I did a Zen pinup for Entity Co which will appear in the **Art of Zen.**

VANTAGE: *What languages do you spea*

ISABEDRA: Filipino (Tagalog) and English I don't have the American accent. believe it's understandable.

HAWKMAN INTERVIEW

HAWKMAN PENCILER STEVE LIEBER, WHO ONLY RECENTLY "BROKE IN" TO DC TALKS ABOUT HOW HE DID IT AND AND OTHER NEAT STUFF.

Hawkman™ & © DC Comics 1984

VANTAGE: Where did you learn to draw?

LIEBER: Well, I was always a doodler as a kid. I never took the idea of drawing for a living seriously, 'til I went to Penn State. I was a Business major there and I was drawing instead of taking notes in class. When doodles staring pushing accounting notes off the page, I started to realize I should be taking more art classes. (laughter) One of the things about fine arts up there, which I enjoyed, was there was way too much freedom. I didn't know how to draw yet. But, they were interested in unleashing my creative capability. They were going to teach me how to draw from all different perspectives. I had been hearing about the Joe Kubert School — I had been reading about it in the fanzines. So I checked it out. I signed up there. Of course, Joe Kubert is the creator of Hawkman, Sgt. Rock, Tor…

VANTAGE: So the gentleman who ran your school invented the character?

LIEBER: Yes. Joe is probably the single strongest influence on my work, just by sheer knowledge and force of personality.

VANTAGE: I understand the Joe Kubert School is quite an experience, it's unique.

LIEBER: Very much so. It's a very intense experience. If you start a program at a professional college, you're taking other academic subjects, great campus activities, lovely women around. The Kubert School is a cross between an apprenticeship with a cartoonist and living in a monastery with a little locker room suite. We started off with 100 students and by the third year it was down to 25.

VANTAGE: Wow. Do most of them drop out or get cut?

LIEBER: They drop out. It's an insane amount of work.

VANTAGE: Do they all go into comics?

When doodles started pushing accounting notes off the page, I started to realize I should be taking more art classes.

LIEBER: Some decide they'd rather go into advertising, animation, or illustration. Advertising pays very well.

***VANTAGE:** What other work have you done?*

LIEBER: My first published comic was Now Comics Twilight Zone. Prior to Hawkman I think I sold a Falcon story for Marvel.

***VANTAGE:** What would be your advice for someone trying to break in?*

LIEBER: Patience. Make sure there's nothing else in the world that you could see doing for a living besides this. Keep in mind that you're in for the long haul. Even if you don't get hired this year you've got another 60 years of a career in front of you. I sent [Editor] Archie Goodwin over 100 pages of samples before he hired me. Every one of those pages was a day's work that was essentially done for no money. It took a really long time. On the first day of every month I wasn't just mailing out a package to Archie Goodwin, I was mailing to every Editor at DC, Marvel, Valiant, Dark Horse... It's a lot like a siege on a fort. You just keep battering away until there's an opening. On the first of each month I was making my deadlines even though they weren't giving me any assignments. They had a 54-page annual in addition to the monthly comic. There was just no way that was going to happen. They brought me on to work on the annual. We alternated chapters. I was lucky because the material really showcased my strengths. There were teenagers... there was war material that I like to do.

***VANTAGE:** My understanding is that doing teens or young children can be difficult.*

LIEBER: For a lot of artists it is. It depends o what they're into. I like working on th Archie-style material without the Archie cha acterization. Anything naturalistic with regu lar human beings really catches my interes

***VANTAGE:** You work out of the Midwest an DC is in New York. There's no longer bullpen at the big publishers?*

LIEBER: They still have them. They still hav very large in-house staffs for corrections an faxes. Thanks to faxes and Federal Expres I've never done any work in the office. Aft I got out of the Kubert School, I tried to g work from there. I showed up with my po folio. When you get to New York it's real exciting, because every one of those wi dows has a job waiting for you. When I we to DC I was thoroughly impressed. When th doorway opened up I think I saw seven gu walking out with their heads hanging dow carrying portfolios. (laughter)

THE VIEW FROM OBLIVION

By Corey Bond

> *"Is it possible to make a good movie based on a Marvel comic?"*

Thanks to the modern wonder of bootleg video, I have seen the Fantastic Four movie. The experience was not exactly a highlight of my adult life. As with any traumatic event, I'm sure it will take me a while to sort out all of the facts in my head, such as whether or not it was actually cheesier than the Captain America film. Which isn't to say that I was disappointed. This is, after all, supposed to be a humor column, and if the FF had a blockbuster hit on their hands, I doubt I'd have much to say about it. For example, I enjoyed The Crow immensely, but it didn't inspire any droll witticisms. The Shadow was a bit of a disappointment, but it was entertaining nonetheless, so I don't feel the need to pillory it. (However, I will say that there are rumors about the mystical flying dagger in The Shadow being a key witness in the O.J. Simpson murder trial, and that it is willing to testify if granted immunity.)

But back to the Fantastic Four. I'm sure we're all wondering the same thing: Is it possible to make a good movie based on a Marvel comic? Maybe, maybe not. History would tell us no. Let's just say that the FF didn't break Marvel's string of groaners. We're talking about a movie with lines like, "Holy Freud, Batman, I think you're right!" and with an arch-villain performance that was more overdone than the guest villains on the old Batman TV show. (I mean, how hard could Doctor Doom be to portray? Hadn't the actor ever seen Darth Vader?) Nevertheless, I think that something good could come of it yet.

You see, as bad as the movie is, I did get the pleasure of watching it with **Elementals** creator Bill Willingham, whose comments managed to liven up the experience somewhat. "Guys," he would say, "did I miss something, or did Reed Richards' future mother-in-law just name the team?" This inspired me to imagine a project that could turn all of Marvel's celluloid lemons into lemonade. They need their own cable program on Comedy Central: Marvel Science Theatre 3000.

It's a natural. They've already got the show's logo (check out the imprint on the cover of Guardians of the Galaxy) and enough bad movie fodder for the first two seasons. They could get Stan Lee to host it, accompanied by his puppet robot sidekicks Herbie (c'mon, you remember Herbie, the Human Torch's replacement in the Fantastic Four cartoon) and Ultron. Each episode, Terry Stewart could pull another movie from the Marvel Video Vault and broadcast it at 3am, who would review the films and say "Excelsior!" a lot. Just imagine what gems they've got to choose from: Three Captain America movies (two made-for-TV and one straight-to-video), The Punisher, The Fantastic Four, The Return of the Incredible Hulk (starring Thor), The Trial of the Incredible Hulk (starring Daredevil), The Death of the Incredible Hulk (starring some woman that I really thought was Black Widow), plus more Amazing Spider-Man made-for-television movies and TV episodes than I care to name here. I even vaguely remember a Doctor Strange movie from my childhood. We're talking Cable Comedy in the Mighty Marvel Manner!

Marvel 2000 logo ™ & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group.

Hawkman™ & © DC Comics 1994

Seriously, these films deserve the MST3K treatment. Let's consider the climax of the Fantastic Four. (Here I will inject a quick Spoiler Warning for those fans who don't want the ending ruined for them, although I maintain that the ending was already ruined by whoever wrote the screenplay.) The rebels are fighting Darth Vader in the Death Star, where his death ray is gearing up to blast Alderaan out of existence. No, wait, sorry, wrong movie. Where was I? Oh yeah, the Fantastic Four is fighting Doctor Doom in his fortress in Latveria, where his laser is gearing up to blast New York out of existence. Why New York? Why not? "I can't stop it!" cries Reed. The laser fires.

"Just imagine what gems they've got to choose from"

"No," responds the Torch, "but I can. I've been wanting to blow up that destructor ray since I was a kid. Flame on!" And having delivered this speech, the Torch flies out the window and, pouring on as much speed as he can muster, eventually *catches up to the other end of the laser beam!* Then, after using his body to block the beam from hitting New York, he recovers his composure and projects flame from his hands to counter the beam until, I assume, we are to believe the laser cannon reaches an overload and explodes.

For me, this scene raises a number questions. First of all, how far is it fro Latveria to New York? Shouldn't the curvatu of the Earth be a factor? Since a laser bea travels in a straight line, shouldn't Doom ha bounced it off some sort of reflector? Can y stop a laser with flame? And more impo tantly, considering that a laser moves at t speed of light, isn't it safe to say that t beam could've hit any target on the plan no matter how far away might be, before t Torch had time to y "Flame on!"? And ev ignoring that, would the Torch's flying fas than the speed of lig within Earth's atmosphe have some sort of catastrophic effect on t surrounding area? Surely I'm not the only o who would enjoy watching Stan, Herbie, a Ultron point out these problems every wee Until James Cameron gets around to filmi the Amazing Spider-Man movie, Make M Marvel Science Theatre 3000!

(Corey Bond, humor columnist and comic reteiler, hopes he saw you at the Dallas Fantasy Fair this summer, and since it hadn't actually happened yet at the time of this writing, he also hopes that he had a lot of fun.)

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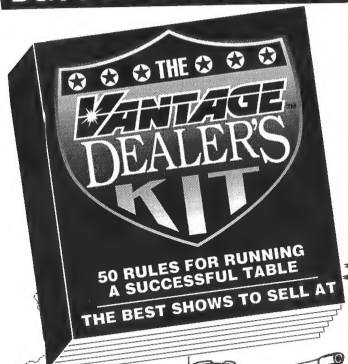

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